

Mount San Jacinto State Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at (951) 659-2607. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P. O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

Mount San Jacinto State Park

25905 Highway 243

Idyllwild, CA 92549

(951) 659-2607

*Photos on cover and inside panel
courtesy of Raymond Shobe*

*John Muir once
remarked that the view
from Mount San Jacinto
“was the most sublime
spectacle to be found
anywhere on this earth.”*

When you enter Mount San Jacinto State Park, you come into the heart of the wilderness, high in the San Jacinto Mountains. This 14,000-acre park can be reached via Highway 243 from Idyllwild or by tram from Palm Springs. Granite peaks, sub-alpine forests and mountain meadows offer the best opportunity to enjoy a primitive high-country experience south of the Sierra Nevada range.

San Jacinto Peak—a giant, often snow-capped crag marked by great upthrusts of weathered granite—rises almost 11,000 feet above sea level. It is the highest peak in the San Jacinto Range and in the California State Park system, and the second-highest point in southern California.

Several other peaks within the park are over 10,000 feet, and much of the rest of the park, standing at more than 6,000 feet in elevation, is cool and comfortable in the summer. Expect summertime highs in the mid-70s with occasional hot spells reaching the low 90s. Evening temperatures generally fall into the mid-50s. Winter is cold with sudden snowfalls and temperatures dropping near zero at times.

From the Tramway Mountain Station, you can see Palm Springs, green with golf courses and agriculture made possible

Photo courtesy of Sean Hueber



View from Mountain Station

through irrigation of the Coachella Valley. The vistas from the park sweep into the desert beyond Palm Springs for more than a hundred miles, extending southeast to the Salton Sea and beyond into the Imperial Valley.

The northeast face of the San Jacinto Range plunges down 9,000 feet in less than four miles, making it one of the steepest and most spectacular escarpments in North America.

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, one of the largest and longest single-lift passenger tramways in the world, carries passengers 2.5 miles from the Valley Station in Chino Canyon to the Mountain Station, on the edge of the Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness. After a lift of nearly 6,000 feet, visitors find themselves in a world quite different from the valley below. Trails of varying difficulty beckon those who are prepared to explore forests relieved by small meadows.

PARK HISTORY

Cahuilla, native Californians, used the area for seasonal hunting. They traversed its wooded canyons and protected valleys gathering food and other resources. Their trails still cross the mountain, and several bedrock mortars can be seen in or near the park. The mortars date back hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, giving evidence of long-term human habitation.

European settlers at first used the high country in much the same ways as the native people had, hunting the abundant deer and bighorn sheep. Later, loggers began to harvest the hillsides of pine while domestic sheep and cattle grazed the fragile mountain meadows. In 1897 President Grover Cleveland created the San Jacinto Forest Reserve to help contain and control these practices. The Reserve became the San Jacinto National Forest in 1907.



View of San Jacinto Range from desert floor



Aerial tramway

When the California State Park System was established in 1927, a San Jacinto state park became a priority. The first 12,695 acres were acquired for the park in 1930 and became a unit of the State Park System in 1963.

In 1945 the California legislature passed a bill authorizing construction of the aerial tramway, which was finally completed in 1963. Visitors to the park can now take a tram ride of less than 15 minutes and experience a series of biotic communities equivalent to a trip from desert scrub at 2,640 feet elevation to a mixed conifer forest dotted with wildflowers at 8,516 feet near the top.

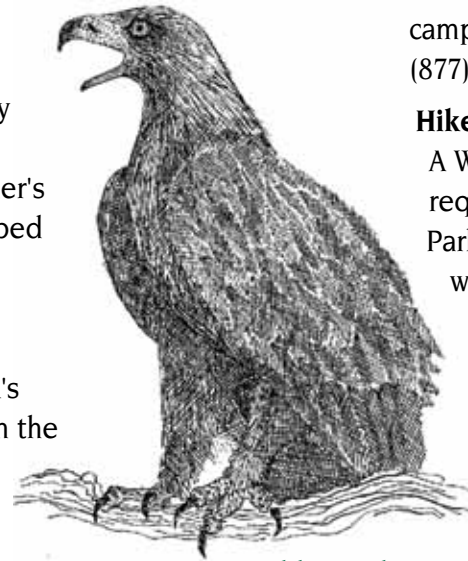
NATURAL HISTORY

Similar to the Sierra Nevada, the San Jacinto Mountains rest on a major fault block with a distinct westward tilt.

The entire San Jacinto region—bounded on the west by the San Jacinto Fault and on the north and east by the San Andreas Fault—is seismically active and slowly rising in elevation.

In 2002, 255 acres of Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness were designated as the Hidden Divide Natural Preserve. This classification provides the highest level of protection possible to the sensitive wildlife, plant species and distinctive natural features found in the Hidden Divide area.

Park visitors may see white-headed woodpeckers, Steller's jays or yellow-rumped warblers. Raptors include peregrine falcons and golden eagles. Noisy Clark's nutcrackers feed on the seeds of the forest's pine species—Jeffrey, sugar and lodgepole pines.



Golden eagle

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

A short walk from the tram station takes you into Long Valley, with a ranger station, a picnic area with restrooms, an adventure center, a self-guided nature trail, and the Desert View Trail overlooking Coachella Valley.

Camping

Developed campsites are available in Mount San Jacinto State Park at Idyllwild and Stone Creek campgrounds. Reservations are recommended; call (800) 444-7275 or visit www.parks.ca.gov up to seven months in advance. Summer weekends fill up quickly. Sites accommodate motor homes or trailers up to 24 feet long. Winter camping demands preparation and good equipment. United States Forest Service (USFS) developed campsites may be reserved by calling (877) 444-6777.

Hike-in Camping

A Wilderness Camping Permit is required. The USFS and California State Parks manage the two areas of wilderness in the San Jacinto Mountains. Camping permits must be obtained from the agency that administers the area where you plan to camp. Overnight permits issued by either agency are honored for daytime travel through the other agency's lands. Please refer to the map to verify the jurisdiction in which you plan to camp. Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness permit applications are available at www.parks.ca.gov and must be mailed at least 10 days in advance. For USFS camping permits, call (909) 382-2602 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino.



Winter snow recreation

Day Hiking

For the visitor with time and energy, the park offers an extensive trail system designed and developed over the years to minimize the impact on scenic and wilderness values. Popular hikes start from the tram's Mountain Station. See Round Valley in a moderate loop of 4.5 miles through a luscious green meadow with a 700-foot elevation gain. You can also hike from Long Valley to San Jacinto Peak, a strenuous round-trip of 12 miles with

a 2,400-foot elevation gain. All day-hikers must have permits to enter the wilderness.

Obtain day-use permits on the day of your trip by visiting one of the ranger stations shown on the map. These permits are honored by both agencies except during the summer, when day-use permits to enter the wilderness via Devil's Slide Trail can only be obtained from the USFS ranger station in Idyllwild.



Emergency shelter built by the Civilian Conservation Corps below San Jacinto Peak

In the state wilderness areas, camping is permitted in designated sites only. Only chemical or backpack stoves are permitted. Fires are NOT allowed at any time.

Group Camping

Group size in the wilderness is limited to a maximum of 15 people (12 for USFS), and only one permit is issued for each group. Please be aware that snow normally covers the wilderness from December through April. High winds and temperatures below zero are common.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES &

Both tram stations have accessible restrooms, food service and picnic areas. Mountain Station has an accessible elevator and viewpoint.

Stone Creek Campground has a new accessible trail and accessible parking, restrooms and picnic area. The Idyllwild area near state park headquarters has accessible camping, parking, showers, restrooms and picnic area.



PLEASE REMEMBER

- **Permits**—You must have a permit to enter the wilderness.
- **Litter**—Pack out all trash and garbage.
- **Sanitation**—In USFS areas, bury human waste at least eight inches deep and at least 200 feet from the nearest drainage, trail or camp. In the state wilderness, use the pit toilets in camp areas.
- **Waste Water**—Wash dishes and dispose of waste water at least 100 feet from any stream, spring or faucet.
- **Trails**—Stay on trails. Help preserve plants and prevent erosion by not making shortcuts.
- **Horses**—Equestrians must pack in weed-free feed; grazing in the meadows is prohibited.
- **Smoking**—No smoking in the wilderness.
- **Hunting**—The wilderness is a state game refuge; possession of firearms, bows and arrows, or slingshots is prohibited.
- **Dogs** are prohibited in the state wilderness. U.S. Forest Service wilderness allows dogs, but they must be on leash at all times. **A USFS permit does not allow you to pass through the state wilderness with your dog.**
- **Fires** are prohibited in the state wilderness. Backpacking stoves are permitted.
- **Motor vehicles, bicycles, strollers and all wheeled devices are prohibited in both the state and USFS wilderness.**



Photo courtesy of Sean Hueber

Preserve plants and prevent erosion by staying on trails



Photo courtesy of Raymond Shobe

Weather can be unpredictable; bring warm clothing to prepare for weather changes.

Accessibility is continually improving; however, the wilderness area is extremely rugged. Call the park at (951) 659-2607 or visit **<http://access.parks.ca.gov>** for current information.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
200 Palm Canyon Dr., Borrego Springs (760) 767-5311
- Lake Perris State Recreation Area,
17801 Lake Perris Dr., Perris
(951) 940-5600

This park receives support in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information contact:
Mt. San Jacinto Natural History Association
255 N. El Cielo Rd., Suite 140, #141,
Palm Springs, CA 92262
<http://www.msjnha.org>

